

RESPONSE TO OFFICE ACTION
DATED OCTOBER 20, 2005

Appln. No. 10/734,040

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November 9, 2005

REMARKS

This is in response to the Office Action dated October 20, 2005. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Request for Continued Examination

Applicant files this reply in conjunction with a Request for Continued Examination pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Accompanying the request is Credit Card Form PTO-2038 authorizing the charge of \$790 pursuant to 37 CFR 1.17(e).

Summary of Claim Rejections

Claims 1-15 are pending in the application and all are rejected as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,643,464 to Weinhold.

Summary of the Invention

Applicant's claims are directed to a coupling assembly for flexibly joining pipes to one another end to end and permitting axial, angular and torsional deflections between them. The coupling assembly comprises a first ring attachable to one of the pipe ends. The first ring has an outer diameter greater than the pipe and an outwardly facing circumferential groove. A first sealing member is positionable within the groove of the first ring. The first sealing member extends circumferentially around the first ring. A second ring is attachable to another of the pipe ends to be joined. The second ring has an outer diameter greater than the pipe and an outwardly facing circumferential groove. A second sealing member is positionable within the groove of the second ring and extends circumferentially around the second ring. A band is positionable in overlying relation with and surrounding the first and second rings. The band has an inwardly facing

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surface sealingly engageable with the first and second sealing members. A housing is positionable in overlying relation with and surrounding the rings and the band. The housing is radially spaced apart from the band allowing the band to float on the sealing members. The housing has a pair of circumferential rims positioned in longitudinally spaced apart relation to one another. Each rim is sized and toleranced to maintain the aforementioned spaced relation between the housing and the band. The housing also has a pair of first shoulders positioned in spaced apart relation and facing one another. Each shoulder is engageable with one of the rings for limiting axial and angular deflection of one pipe relative to the other. The housing also has a pair of second shoulders positioned on opposite sides of the band. Each one of the second shoulders is engageable with the band for maintaining the band engaged with the sealing members to ensure a fluid tight joint.

Summary of the Amendments to the Specification

Applicant has added to the description an explanation of the pair of second shoulders 33 as shown in Figures 4-6. The shoulders were part of the original filing. No new matter has been added.

Summary of the Claim Amendments

Applicant has amended independent Claims 1 and 10 to recited that the housing has a pair of second shoulders that are engageable with an edge of the band to help maintain it engaged with sealing members to ensure a fluid tight joint. Support for these amendments may be found in Figures 4-6 as originally filed, which illustrate first shoulders 30 engageable with the rings 32 and 34 and second shoulders,

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labeled 33 in the drawings as amended in applicant's previous reply of August 3, 2005.

Arguments Traversing Rejections as to Anticipation

The structure of housing portions 14 and 16 as recited in amended Claims 1 and 10 differs significantly from the housing 24 shown in Figure 2 of U.S. Patent No. 4,643,464 to Weinhold. Weinhold discloses a straight sided housing that has no structure in the form of multiple shoulders as recited in applicant's claims. Applicant asserts that Weinhold does not anticipate either independent Claims 1 and 10 as amended because of the shoulders 30 and 33 positioned within the housing portions 14 and 16, which are not disclosed in Weinhold or other prior art known to the applicant.

The presence of multiple shoulders as shown in Figures 4-6 of the application limits the axial and angular displacement of the pipes being joined and also allows a relatively narrow band to be used while still ensuring a fluid tight seal at the joint.

Weinhold cannot properly support a rejection of Claims 1 and 10 on the basis of anticipation because it fails to teach every claim element, specifically, Weinhold does not disclose a housing having multiple shoulders as recited in applicant's claims. Claims 2-9 and 11-14 depend, respectively, on Claims 1 and 10 and should be allowable for the same reasons that Claims 1 and 10 are allowable.

Applicant has canceled Claim 15 drawn to a method of flexibly attaching pipes to one another.

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Summary

Applicant contends that the amendments to Claims 1 and 10 overcome the rejection of these claims as anticipated by Weinhold and place the application in condition for allowance. Applicant requests, therefore, that the application be passed to issue.

Respectfully submitted,

SYNNESTVEDT & LECHNER LLP

By: 

John A. Chionchio
Reg. No. 40,954

1101 Market Street, Suite 2600
Philadelphia, PA 19107-2950
Telephone: (215) 923-4466
Facsimile: (215) 923-2189

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Enclosures

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